

## National Health Observances

### August

Happiness Happens Month  
American Indian Heritage Month  
What Will Your Legacy Be Month  
Get Ready for Kindergarten Month

### Week of August 1 - 7

Simplify Your Life Week  
Single Working Women's Week

### Week of August 8 - 14

Exercise with Your Children Week

### Week of August 22 - 26

National Safe at Home Week

### Week of August 25 - 31

Be Kind to Humankind Week

### September

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month  
Baby Safety Month  
College Savings Month  
National Alcohol & Drug Addiction



## What is EAP?

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL** service that can assist you and your eligible family members with **ANY** personal concern, large or small.

## Caring for Aging Parents

As more Americans live longer, millions of middle-aged adults find themselves caring for their aging parents. It's not an easy task, especially for those with children still living at home.



"Caregiving can be so overwhelming, it's almost impossible," says Donna Cohen, Ph.D., professor and chairperson of the department of aging and mental health at the Florida Mental Health Institute in Tampa, and coauthor of *Caring for Your Aging Parents*. "But it can be done if you develop specific skills and tailor them according to your parents' needs and your family's circumstances."

For example: Your mother can't see well anymore but insists on driving. Instead of taking away her car keys, sit down with her and begin a dialogue. Say, "Mom, I'm worried about you. Aren't you worried about your driving?"

### Don't do it Alone

Every family is different, there's no one right way of caring for aging parents. "But there are wrong ways, and the worst one is to do it alone," Dr. Cohen says. The demands of caregiving can become so immense that they can affect your health, leading to illness and depression.

"Half of all caregivers get depressed in the course of caregiving," Dr. Cohen says. "In turn, depression takes a toll on their physical health, affecting their job performance and can even lead to the abuse of the parents they're caring for."

The following is a framework designed to help you provide care more effectively.

### Don't Parent Your Parents

As your parents age and become frail or ill, resist the urge to regard them as children. Instead, think of caregiving as a family business and yourself as an executive with problems to solve.

"Treat your parents as having a legitimate role. This empowers a partnership," Dr. Cohen says. "Your role will be to take control, but it's not with the same authority you use with your children."

## Exercise With Your Children Week: August 8 - 14

### De-Activate Your Screens

- **TV Time-Out:** Time spent watching TV, playing video games or surfing the Internet is time your kids could be using to stay physically active.
- **Unglue Yourself:** Your kids won't like cutting back on Screen Time if they see you as the family couch potato. The best way to influence their behavior is to set a good example.
- **No Re-runs:** Change things up to keep activity interesting. Try physical activities that offer variety such as shooting hoops, walking the dog, playing catch or riding bikes.
- **Pre-Screening:** Have your kids pick their favorite shows each week. Turn on the TV just for those shows, and then turn it off afterwards. That way, they won't end up watching whatever comes on next.



### Fit as a Family

- **Walk the Walk:** Eat dinner as a family, and then go for a walk together.
- **Game of the Week:** Spend a Saturday or Sunday afternoon skating or playing touch football.
- **Form a Team:** Sign up for a family fun run, fun walk or car wash.
- **Sign Up:** Buy a family membership at the neighborhood recreation center, YMCA or health club.
- **Lesson Up:** Check your neighborhood park for free tennis or golf lessons, and sign up as a family.
- **Tackle Chores:** Do housework or yard work together.

“Besides determining what’s workable for your parents, your goal should be to find the best way for everyone to work together,” Dr. Cohen says.

### Stay Optimistic

Unlike caring for children, caring for aging parents, particularly ill ones, involves the reality that their deaths are approaching.

Nonetheless, “let yourself be guided by a tempered optimism,” Dr. Cohen says. “Don’t let your hope for the future die too fast.”

Within limits, there are things you can do now to maximize comfort and improve your parents’ quality of life. “You can convey support and show affection by giving your mother a new chenille throw because you know she’ll enjoy its softness and warmth,” she says. “Even holding someone’s hand is a powerful way to ease pain and loneliness.”

All told, “caring is more than loving,” she says. “It’s a series of discreet skills that involve listening to your parents, making decisions about their needs and taking action, if necessary. And it has mutual benefits. Through caring, we can learn more about ourselves.”

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To manage caregiving effectively, seek help and advice from professionals and your siblings. For example: Consult a financial planner or attorney regarding your parents’ estate, living wills and other legal matters. Work with physicians to understand your parents’ health problems and the treatments they’re getting. Talk to a pharmacist to learn the potential side effects of their medications and to make sure those medications are compatible.

Meet with your siblings over breakfast, not at the end of the day when everyone’s tired. Describe the problem you’re facing and share your feelings about it with them. Let them do the same.



*Making Connections, Creating Solutions*

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